



# PRESS RELEASE

*Office of the United States Attorney  
for the District of Arizona*

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## I.N.S. INSPECTOR SENTENCED ON DRUG TRAFFICKING & BRIBERY CHARGES

**PHOENIX, ARIZONA** -- A U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service Inspector with 16 years experience working at the San Luis, Port of Entry, was sentenced in federal court June 25, 2001, to thirty months incarceration on two felony counts charging him with Bribery and Conspiracy to Import in excess of 100 Kilograms of Marijuana.

The United States Attorney's Office announced that GUSTAVO F. RAMIREZ, 42, a Supervisory Inspector with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge James A. Teilborg on charges of Conspiracy to Import Marijuana, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 963, and Accepting a Bribe in Relation to his Official Duties, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 201(b)(2). In addition to the prison term, RAMIREZ was ordered to pay fines totaling \$12,500.00.

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RAMIREZ was indicted on January 9, 2001, in connection with the November 19, 2000, seizure of 582.9 pounds of marijuana discovered in two vehicles he allowed to enter the United States at the San Luis Port of Entry. He plead guilty to the Bribery and Conspiracy charges on March 22, 2001.

Documents filed during the proceedings established that during the early morning of November 19, 2000, three vehicles entered the United States at the San Luis Port of Entry using an entry lane manned by RAMIREZ. The vehicles were subsequently stopped by a U.S. Customs Inspector. The first car was driven by co-defendant Teresita Vasquez-Rodriguez. Vasquez' car was inspected, no contraband was found, and she was allowed to leave. An inspection of the second vehicle revealed 58 packages containing approximately 284.1 pounds of marijuana laying uncovered in the trunk. The third vehicle was also searched and was found to contain 47 packages of marijuana weighing approximately 298.8 pounds also laying uncovered in the trunk. A total of 582.9 pounds of marijuana were recovered from the second and third cars. The driver of one of the vehicles told investigators that RAMIREZ was being paid by a drug organization out of Mexicali, Mexico to allow loads of marijuana to cross freely into the United States.

On November 28, 2000, federal officials served a search warrant at the residence of RAMIREZ. Agents found \$61,600 in a Brinks security box located in the trunk of RAMIREZ's 1996 Mazda Millennia. RAMIREZ later agreed to be interviewed and ultimately admitted that he passed marijuana through the Port of Entry for the Mexicali drug organization and agreed to cooperate with federal authorities.

RAMIREZ, who pled guilty after reaching a plea agreement with federal prosecutors, faced a possible maximum sentence of forty years in prison and possible fines of two million dollars.

RAMIREZ joins a growing number of federal officials who have been accused or found guilty of wrongdoing at the San Luis Port of Entry. On January 7, 1998, U.S. Customs Senior Inspector Bobby J. Butler, 52, a 19-year veteran of the U.S. Customs Service, pled guilty to two counts of unlawful disclosure of classified information, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section

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1905. Those charges arose from Butler's disclosure of information to known drug traffickers concerning the details of upcoming narcotics destruction operations involving millions of dollar of confiscated drugs. On March 24, 1998, Butler was sentenced to one year probation and fined \$4,000 in relation to these disclosures and was immediately terminated from federal employment.

On August 18, 1999, INS Inspector Ronnie Joseph Brickey was indicted for income tax evasion resulting from his expenditure of over \$150,000.00 in unreported cash he received and spent during the 1998 taxable year. That indictment alleged that Brickey, while engaged in his official duties as an Inspector at the San Luis Port of Entry, allowed drug-laden vehicles to cross into the United States from Mexico in exchange for large cash payoffs. After a three-week trial, a jury convicted Brickey on all counts. On October 25, 2000, U.S. District Judge Earl H. Carroll sentenced Brickey to 37 months incarceration and assessed a \$40,000.00 fine.

Most recently, U.S. Customs Inspector Richard Talamante of San Luis, Arizona, was arraigned March 14, 2001, on a three-count sealed indictment charging him with Aiding the Transportation of Illegal Aliens, Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain, and Witness Tampering. The indictment is not evidence of guilt and Talamante, like all suspects, is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Talamante was arrested on March 8, 2001 at his home in San Luis by Special Agents of Federal Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Customs Service, and entered pleas of not guilty before United States Magistrate Judge Virginia Mathis in Phoenix, Arizona, to each of the felony charges levied against him. Trial in that case is set for later this year.

"There is no higher priority for federal prosecution than cases involving corruption of federal officials. These crimes strike at the very heart of the public's confidence in its institutions of government and sully the reputation of the many honest and dedicated men and women who daily risk their lives securing our nation's borders", said Assistant United States Attorney Michael Shelby.

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The RAMIREZ case was investigated by the Yuma offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Customs Service. The prosecution was handled by Assistant United States Attorney Michael Shelby.

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